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29 December 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director (Support)

SUBJECT : Recruitment and Selection of Staff Employees: An Appraisal.

1. In accordance with your instructions I have made a review of the Agency's recruitment and selection practices, with particular reference to the procurement of professional-level staff employees. Only incidental attention was paid to clerical, covert and contract recruitment, not because they present no problems but because the procurement of qualified professionals is the area of most critical current concern; it is this area which reveals most strikingly some of the basic weaknesses of our personnel management system; and corrective action here will go far to strengthen related activities. My review, as extensive as time and geography would permit, included discussions with a broadly representative cross-section of personnel throughout the Agency and with faculty members and officials of a number of the schools which constitute our major recruitment source. Most of the individuals in the Office of Personnel who are concerned with the subject were consulted and their procedures reviewed, and numerous staff studies and case histories were read. I obtained data for comparative purposes from several other Government agencies and reviewed a score or more selected items of the current literature concerning recruitment and selection.

2. No realistic appraisal of these functions can be made without regard to the context in which they exist. Therefore, as background for specific discussion and recommendations to follow, I believe it is necessary to recognize certain environmental facts of life. We start with the fact that the Agency is falling behind in the competition for the nation's talent. With a mission which should interest and challenge the best young minds in the country, and with freedom of action to develop almost any kind of staffing policies and procedures, we continue to fall short in key categories of personnel and to rely upon a patchwork of recruiting arrangements. Several persons have investigated one or another aspect of the problem and have seen solutions in such things as shaking up the recruiting staff, altering selection standards, making organizational and jurisdictional adjustments, resorting to direct recruitment by components, etc. These suggestions, whatever their specific merits, fail to get to the basic problem which is our lack of a coherent, consistent, responsible personnel management program. This assertion rests upon the following observations which I believe to be facts bearing on the problem.

a. The Agency is entirely too isolated from the thought and experience in personnel matters of the rest of the nation. I have been unable to identify any organization within the United States which has the necessary current familiarity with personnel management developments in industry

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and in other Government agencies. Studies on specific subjects are made from time to time but there appears to be no continuing across-the-board attempt to monitor the field for the sake of our own institutions.

b. The Office of Personnel is weak. Whether as a result of deliberate Agency policy or by default, abdication or erosion, it has become largely a central processing organization with little real influence or control. The Director of Personnel has responsibility in personnel matters but no commensurate authority. Operating offices find it easy and expedient to develop local practices which may serve their own temporary aims but which confuse priorities, complicate the work of the Medical Staff and Office of Security, prolong the processing time in applicant cases, and affect for better or worse the Agency's "image" among outside recruitment sources. Panels and committees proliferate.

c. The spirit which animates the Agency-wide personnel machinery is not good. Specifically, there is too much criticism, bickering and attribution of blame among organizational elements and programs; the Office of Personnel is held in low esteem in the Agency; morale is low among its own employees. Operating offices, though quick to praise individual members of the Office of Personnel, express the feeling that the Office as a whole is "good, grey Government" and that neither energetic nor imaginative attention to their problems is to be expected. As one spokesman put it, "the Office is so busy putting out brush fires and defending the past that it never has time to anticipate or avoid the problems of the future." Within the Office there is a widespread, candid awareness of weaknesses in the "system", coupled in all too many cases with the expressed conviction that nothing is likely to be done about them. Certain areas, notably the so-called Career Service Support Branch, are regarded by Office of Personnel members as the "end of the line", a sort of assignment Siberia, and others, notably the Clandestine Services Personnel Division, are considered to be over-staffed and under-employed. Many employees express the feeling that the Office lacks leadership and a sense of direction, and that a curtain hangs between them and the "front office", a curtain which is seldom lifted except for the transmittal downward of questions, criticisms and directives.

d. Our "image" is slipping among the recruitment sources. I believe we have lived down most of the adverse effects of the Cuba affair and it becomes increasingly specious to blame our recruitment lags on it. Of much more serious long-term concern are: the absence of affirmative Agency public relations measures; recruitment efforts by various offices which appear to the schools to be uncoordinated, whether they actually are or not; numerous instances of poorly handled or unexplained actions in applicant cases; adverse feed-back to the campuses from dissatisfied

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employees or ex-employees; and the inability of our field recruiters to spend enough time in developing and cultivating lead sources. There is evidence that a small but growing number of college placement officials and academicians are coming to view us as a loose-jointed organization with a great potential "sales appeal" which fails consistently to put its best foot forward, attracts adverse attention by its overly-obvious quest for anonymity, is too often indifferent to the normal desires of applicants and their sponsors for reliable, timely information, and which refuses to support its recruitment efforts, in the face of growing competition, with even the most elementary publicity and public relations aids. A note of satire or ridicule creeps in from time to time and this is a danger signal which should not be ignored.

3. On the positive side we have a number of great assets, not the least of which is the large number of very capable people now engaged in personnel operations who know the kind of job which should be done and who would like to be able to do it. In the colleges and universities there is, either active or latent, a great volume of constructive interest in the Agency which, if properly tapped, can ensure the success of our recruitment efforts. There is evidence throughout the Agency of a desire for strengthened and more effectively coordinated recruitment and selection procedures, and of a willingness to experiment, possibly even to accept some limitations on local autonomy if there is a reasonable prospect that better personnel service will result. We have also some fifteen years of experience which should afford some guidance as to the desirable ingredients of an effective personnel system.

4. I recognize that basic changes in personnel management will require Agency policy decisions as to the kind of system that is wanted, and a paper of this nature can do no more than call attention to some of the elements of the problem. I believe very strongly, however, that no more than temporary or partial solutions will be found for the problems of a particular functional area (such as recruitment and selection) unless and until some basic changes are made. The most skillful, sophisticated procedures for recruitment and selection will come eventually to nothing unless validated and supported in the long term by an honest, satisfying personnel management program. This is not to say, however, that all action should await such major decisions. There are a number of things which can and should be done in the near future to improve our recruitment and selection practices. They are discussed and recommendations are offered in the following paragraphs, in no particular order of priority, under subject headings as indicated.

5. The Statement of Personnel Requirements

The recruitment and selection cycle begins with a statement by the operating unit of the numbers and kinds of persons needed. These statements, though much better now than they have been in the past, still tend to be expressed in overly-general terms. This is particularly true of certain unusual, scarce-category positions such as Missile Structural Specialist, Astrophysicist, etc., in which the problem is one of expressing highly technical requirements in words which will offer the layman recruiter a

precise guide. The problem is increased by the method used to transmit the requirement from headquarters to the recruiter in the field. He usually gets it in the form of a 3x5 card, with an occasional back-up memorandum which supplies further data. All too often, however, he has to interpret the requirement as best he can on the basis of scanty data and either go back to headquarters for further information, a time-consuming process, or take a chance on finding the right candidate for the job. This is not a major problem but is one which requires constant attention. Essentially a problem of communication, it requires that the Placement Officers insist constantly on the most complete and detailed statements possible, and that the field recruiters be thoroughly briefed. Every opportunity should be taken to enable the recruiters to be briefed directly by substantive personnel of the operating offices.

6. Field Recruitment

There are eight Specialized (i.e., professional-level) Recruiters

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From these headquarters they cover, in theory, the fifty states. They are able, experienced, hard-working men and I doubt that a better team could be found in Government. However, the size of their territories makes it physically impossible for them to achieve more than partial coverage. They cannot make regular visits to all the colleges and universities which should be covered, nor can they devote sufficient time to the development and cultivation of lead sources and the interviewing of candidates. The current consensus among professional recruiters is that about two working days out of five should be devoted to development of sources and the other three should be so scheduled as to permit completed interviews. Our recruiters now are able to spend about thirty minutes at most with a candidate in the course of an average day's interviewing, and they tend to concentrate on the few schools in each territory which are known to be most productive. They do not like the limitations thus imposed but they accept them. They are authorized an office at their respective headquarters, three hundred hours per year of part-time secretarial help, and a representation allowance of \$100 per year. They come to Washington twice each year for a week's consultation and communicate otherwise through a voluminous correspondence and exchange of telephone calls. They operate without benefit of Agency-supplied public relations aids or pre-screening devices, and with the sporadic assistance of a dwindling group of consultants. Yet they manage to turn up in the neighborhood of 1100 to 1200 professional applicant files per year. If numbers were enough we would be doing well. It is in the quality of the files submitted that we find a growing problem, a problem which arises from our failure to hear about many good potential candidates and from inadequate pre-screening of the candidates the recruiter sees. The Agency has no testing program such as those of NSA, State, USIA and the Civil Service Commission and has taken no steps to gain access to the results of those of the other agencies. We have no attractive brochure to inform and to stimulate the interest of desirable candidates and to motivate them to seek an interview with our recruiter. The ranks of the consultants have

decreased to twenty-seven, ten of whom referred a total of twenty-three candidates during the period January - 1 December 1961. Recruiters have insufficient time to develop contacts and referral sources among professors. They must depend increasingly, therefore, on the college placement officers, such other contacts as they may have, and their own ability to make quick decisions. Though numbers of cases may be maintained, under these circumstances quality tends inevitably to decrease. The result is an increased rate of rejections in the Agency and a consequent failure to meet quotas. An additional adverse factor in 1961 was the Agency's poor press and an abnormally high rate of declinations by candidates when offered appointment. I believe there are several things which can be done to improve the situation, some of which will require Agency policy approval and some of which can be done at any time by administrative action. The following steps are recommended:

a. That the Office of Personnel be authorized to prepare and publish an unclassified descriptive brochure concerning the Agency, for distribution through recruitment channels. This is one point on which there was complete unanimity among all persons I interviewed, and every college official contacted put it first on his list of suggestions. Our competitors are becoming increasingly sophisticated in the production of such recruiting literature, as evidenced by the attached examples chosen at random.

b. That discussions be held with officials of the agencies which conduct mass testing programs, with a view to arranging Agency access to their lists as possible sources of candidate leads. Thousands of college seniors and graduate students take one or more of these tests each year. They could be an invaluable spotting and pre-screening device for us if suitable conditions of access could be arranged with the other agencies.

c. That the field recruiters be asked to nominate the college placement officers whom they consider to be actually or potentially most important to the Agency's recruitment program in their respective areas; that these officers be cleared and invited to Washington for briefing in 1962. The placement officer can do much to make or break the recruiter on his campus and we should cultivate the best possible relations with him. This should be tried experimentally with the thought that such a group might supplement and eventually replace the present Consultant program.

d. That an Advisory Committee on Recruitment and Selection be appointed, advisory to the Director of Personnel, to include top-flight representation from among industrial recruiters, college placement officers, academicians, scientists and psychologists. Such a step would provide a highly respectable source of guidance and, as a manifestation of a progressive, forward-looking attitude, would have definite

public relations value both within the Agency and among recruitment sources.

e. That the recruitment staff be strengthened by the addition of three field recruiters. Though more complete coverage would be advantageous in every territory, exploitation in greater depth would be particularly profitable in the Western states.

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of these areas into territories of manageable size.

f. That Field recruiters be authorized the amount of secretarial assistance they actually require, and that the arbitrary limit of \$100 per year for representational purposes be reviewed and such adjustments made as may be necessary.

7. The Placement Branch

The Career Service Support Branch should be given the more accurate title of Placement Branch and should be rebuilt. In addition to a chief and clerical assistants it now contains a total of four Placement Officers who in theory serve the whole Agency but in fact are able to do little more than transmit files. This is the Branch which should play the largest role in the selection process and should be the essential link between the recruiter and the customer. Instead of being used as at present as a disposal area for persons who have had trouble elsewhere it should be staffed with the best people the Office of Personnel can provide. The Office apparently has failed to realize the extent to which its reputation and good standing are affected by the performance of this Branch. It is recommended that the Branch be authorized six Placement Officers and that it be organized on a team basis as follows:

Office of Chief

Chief
Logging Clerk
Secretary

Team 1

Placement Officer (DD/S Components)
Placement Officer (DD/S Components)
Clerk-Typist

Team 2

Placement Officer (DD/I Components)
Placement Officer (DD/I Components)
Clerk-Typist

Team 3

Placement Officer (DD/I Components)
Placement Officer (Contract, Special Placement, Rotational
Placement)

Clerk-Typist

Such a staffing arrangement would make possible an equalization of work load, more timely and complete service to components, greater speed in the processing of applicant cases, and would enable the Branch to handle applicant correspondence. This correspondence now is handled by a unit in the Records and Services Division. Heavy use is made of form letters which are selected and dispatched according to written instructions from the Recruitment and Placement Branches. Time is wasted in the movement of files back and forth; the letters produced are often inappropriate to the circumstances of the case involved, and communication between the Branches frequently is poor. This correspondence should be handled where the applicant cases are handled, namely in the Placement Branch, and every effort should be made to make it more personalized and responsive.

8. The Selection and Clearance Process

The problems which beset the selection and clearance process center around the inter-related factors of time (excessive time required for each stage of action); decision-making (who makes the decision to accept or reject an applicant?); priorities (every case is of top priority to someone); and the absence of any central authority to monitor and police the system. They are discussed in that order.

a. Time

(1) The time problem begins in the field with the applicant who delays in filling out and submitting the bulky personal History Statement. A random sampling of cases in process in mid-1961 showed an average delay of 39 days from date of interview to date of receipt of the PHS in Headquarters. This appears to be controllable only to the extent that the recruiter can induce more rapid action.

(2) The time involved in Headquarters review prior to decision to accept (i. e., decision to initiate security clearance) varies with the number of offices having an interest in the candidate. A mid-1961 sampling of DD/I cases showed an average of 45 days for a single office and 69 days when two or more offices were involved. A mid-December 1961 sampling showed that this period has been shortened by about 50%, but it remains excessively long.

(3) Security clearances required an average of approximately

120 days in mid-1961 and are now coming through in an average period of about 112 days.

b. Decision-making

Generally speaking, the decision on a candidate is made at the Branch Chief or even Section Chief level. The Office of Personnel has nothing to do with it and the chain of command seldom interferes. In the absence of enforced controls the local supervisor can take his time and, in a desire to have as broad a field of choice as possible and to minimize his risks, he does just that. One is forced to conclude that the review of applicant files does not always enjoy a high priority in spite of protestations to the contrary. Another problem arises from the fact that opinions which should be advisory to the deciding authority turn out in fact to be decisions. I refer in particular to Medical Staff rejections and questions of an "administrative" nature, bearing on suitability, raised by the Office of Security. The overwhelming majority of Medical Staff rejections appear to be based on psychiatric opinion rather than medical fact. I believe they should be taken very seriously but not necessarily as binding; in other words, the Medical Staff role in cases involving other than tangible medical grounds should be to say to the prospective employer, "take this man if you want to, but if you do you should be aware of" Certain Security Office opinions should be handled in the same way. In practice, these adverse judgments usually are accepted as decisions or they go to the Medical-Security-Personnel Panel for decision. This Panel normally is attended by senior members of the Medical and Security Offices but is chaired by an assistant to an assistant to the Director of Personnel. It usually happens that the original view of the Medical or Security Office is then upheld and sanctified by the Panel, and the responsibility for what may be a borderline decision becomes shifted to a Panel the records of which are privileged.

c. Priorities

The question of reliable priorities is of particular importance to the Office of Security which usually gets most of the blame for delays in clearance time. Yet, after years of experience with this problem it remains essentially unchanged. I do not believe it is intractable. The State Department found about 18 months ago that its security clearances (full field investigation and Top Secret Clearance) required an average time of about six months. By the end of January 1962 it will have reduced that time to two months. The Civil Service Commission, which does employee investigations for clearance purposes for several agencies including NASA and USIA, completes 85% of its cases in 30 days and 99% in 60 days. NSA

presently requires four months, but attributes this prolonged period to the fact that the Agency, by law, must depend upon the investigative staff of the armed services, the pace of whose actions it cannot control. Spokesmen of our Office of Security have stated that a sixty-day clearance period for professional applicants could be observed if some reliable authority could assign priorities among the many conflicting demands now placed upon that office by every Agency component.

d. Lack of a Centralized Authority and Point of Control

Little more needs to be said on this point. It is a truism that confusion and delays will exist in any competitive system such as ours in the absence of a central point of coordination and control. The following recommendations are offered:

(1) That the policy be stated by the Deputy Directors that action to review and decide on applicants be given a high priority.

(2) When an applicant is of interest to a single office, that the office be required, within one week of receipt of the file, to reach a decision whether to continue processing.

(3) When two or more offices are involved, that the Placement Officer meet with representatives of the offices concerned for joint review of the applicant (s), and that a decision be reached within a week.

(4) That the principle be reaffirmed that negative judgments on applicants by the Medical Staff and Office of Security, based on other than tangible Medical and Security grounds, be advisory to the decision-making authority.

(5) That the role and functions of the Medical-Security-Personnel Panel be reviewed by the Director of Personnel with a view (a) to reappraising the necessity for such a panel, and (b) strengthening his representation in it.

(6) That the Director of Personnel be authorized and directed to negotiate with other Agency components a system of priorities for the expeditious processing of applicant cases, and that he monitor performance under the system so developed.

(7) That the Placement Officers meet each week, preferably on Friday, with responsible representatives of the offices they service and review the current status of every applicant case pending in their respective areas; and that the results of their reviews, in the form of case status reports, be sent to the field recruiters concerned, not later than Tuesday of the following week.

(8) That inquiries from the operating offices, not covered in these weekly reviews, concerning the Medical or Security clearance status of pending cases, be handled through the Placement Officers.

(9) That the Director of Personnel exercise a continuing surveillance of these procedures with a view to making the Office of Personnel an effective instrument of coordination and control.

9. The JOT Program

For purposes of this paper the Junior Officer Trainees represent in reality only one category of persons affected by our recruitment and selection procedures, and hence everything said above applies in some degree to the; However, so much attention has been directed to the Program in recent months that I have chosen to comment on it separately and offer a few conclusions which I have reached after talking with scores of people and reviewing approximately 300 cases, past, present and pending. I start with the belief that the fundamental purposes of the program are to bring into the Agency high-quality young people and to protect them from the exigencies of local demand until they receive the training, both formal and on-the-job, which every young professional appointee should have but which few outside the program ever get. The failure of the program to meet its quotas in 1961 has been explained on various grounds, including the oft-stated opinion that the selection standards are too high. Such a statement is not susceptible of proof. The facts are that the standards were considered generally acceptable until the current short-fall developed, and they have not changed in any discernable respect. Nor has there been any significant change in application of the standards or other aspects of their operations by the program staff, as illustrated by the following comparison of FY's 1960 and 1961.

	<u>FY 1960</u>	<u>FY 1961</u>
New Applicants	508	614
Rejected by JOTP on preliminary review	212	217
Percentage of preliminary rejections	40%	35%
Temporary actions initiated (i. e., start clearance, bring in for interview, etc.)	296	397
Percentage of temporary actions	58%	65%
Permanent actions initiated	107	124
Percentage of permanent actions	21%	20%
Of the total actions initiated (296 in FY 60, 397 in Fy 61), numbers subsequently cancelled	211	299
Percentage of actions cancelled	71%	76%

Reasons for cancellation:

Applicants declined	59	89
Percentage of total cancelled	28%	30%
Rejected by JOTP	79	127
Percentage of total cancelled	37%	42%
Security, Medical and Panel Rejections	38%	54
Percentage of total cancelled	18%	18%
Applicants requested postponment	35	29
Percentage of total cancelled	17%	10%

The judgment of the program staff may well be questioned in specific cases, especially when the decision is so border-line that it might well go either way, but in general I find no basis for the contention that the qualitative selection standards are too high. The actions proposed in preceding paragraphs will aid the JOT Program as much as any other category of personnel procurement, but in addition there are a few changes which I believe would be beneficial.

- a. Decisions to accept or reject a JOT candidate should be based on the multiple judgment of the Program staff and not on the opinion of one individual.
- b. Any appeal from a selection decision of the JOTP staff should be to the Director of Personnel rather than to another committee or panel.
- c. I question the validity of the OCS Program requirement for JOT candidates who, though draft-eligible, are 23 years of age or older. A few well-qualified young men are lost to the Agency each year because of their inability or unwillingness to enter the military program. The facts appear to be: the chances of a 23-year-old being drafted are small and decrease sharply with each passing year: at least half of those who enter the military program leave the Agency when their military duty is over. Thus, we stand to lose more by maintaining such a requirement than we gain, and I recommend that it be abolished.
- d. I believe that the JOTP staff could and should, without lowering its standards, decide more of its borderline cases in favor of the individual rather than what it apparently considers the good of the Agency. Some attrition is normally to be expected in any training or probationary period, and these "close decisions" might turn out to be very good ones.
- e. The status of all pending JOT cases should be included in the weekly status report to the field recruiters, and it is particularly important that the recruiter be given as much information as possible, on a timely basis, in reject cases.

10. With respect to recruitment and selection functions, including JOT's, I see no necessity for organizational changes other than those already mentioned above, and none are recommended.

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Attachment
Brochures